

REMARKSAmendments

Claims 1, 2, 11, 13, and 14 have been amended and all now recite that a force is applied to the compliant material when the first and second connector portions are secured, and such force can be applied in a plurality of incremental pre-set positions. These amendments have been made solely to more clearly define and recite the present invention, and have been made in the interest of rapid prosecution and without prejudice to Applicants' right to prosecute claims of similar or different scope to the unamended claims in one or more continuation applications.

The Rejection Under 35 USC § 102(e)

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claims 1 to 7 and 9 to 15 under 35 USC § 102(e) as anticipated by Murayama (U.S. Patent No. 6,325,670), insofar as the rejection is applicable to the amended claims.

The present invention is directed to an electrical connector having a housing and cap. The connector is adjustable for accommodating variations in size and tolerance of a sealing member, particularly a gel sealing member, compressed within the connector. The adjustment is made via a latching mechanism, e.g. latching ridges and teeth formed in the side walls of the housing and cap, respectively. Together, the latching teeth and ridges form a plurality of incremental pre-set positions that apply a force and allowance adjustment of the pressure on the sealing member.

Murayama discloses a waterproof connector containing a holder and a housing designed to receive a terminal. A gel member is positioned between the housing and the holder so that the terminal passes through the gel member during insertion into the housing. The holder is engaged with the housing in one of two positions, i.e. a provisional engagement position in which the holder is aligned with the housing by means of provisional engagement protrusions 51, and a plenary engagement position in which a watertight seal is achieved and plenary engagement protrusions 53 are engaged. Therefore, two, and only two, positions are possible when the holder and the housing are connected: the provisional engagement position in which there is no pressure and no compression on the gel member, and the plenary engagement position in which there is pressure on the gel member, the gel member is compressed and a seal is achieved. There is no teaching whatsoever, that an adjustable connector, with a number of different possible levels of compression, can be made.

Therefore, the connector of Murayama would not have the advantages of the present invention, i.e. that a single connector can be used to achieve a wide range of pressures so that a proper seal can be achieved even when the thickness of a sealant is not uniform or the number of inserted electrical contacts varies.

The Rejection Under 35 USC § 103(a)

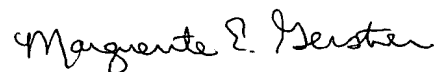
Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claim 8 under 35 USC § 103(a) as unpatentable over Murayama (U.S. Patent No. 6,325,670), insofar as the rejection is applicable to the amended claims.

Claim 8 recites that the fastening mechanism that secures the first connector portion to the second connector portion comprises a spring biased member. There is no teaching in Murayama of any sort of attachment means other than the pair of provisional engagement protrusions 51 and plenary engagement protrusions 53, still less that it would be desirable to use a spring biased member. In fact, a spring biased member would likely provide force on the gel member in all positions, defeating Murayama's goal of having a provisional engagement position with no compression and a plenary engagement position with compression of the gel member. Thus one reading Murayama would be taught away from the advantage of using a spring biased member.

Conclusion

It is believed that this application is now in condition for allowance and such action at an early date is earnestly requested. If, however, there are any outstanding issues which can be usefully discussed by telephone, the Examiner is asked to call the undersigned.

Respectfully submitted,



Marguerite E. Gerstner
Registration No. 32,695
Telephone (650) 361-2483